

Imam al-aazam

Abu Hanifah

and his
Expertise in
Hadith



By
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FALAAH RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Imām al-Azam Abū¹ Hanīfah and his Expertise in Ḥadīth

(Born 80 A.H/689C.E-Died 150 A.H/767 C.E)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين - الصلاة والسلام على سيد المرسلين

Nu'mān ibn Thābit was born in the city of Kufa (modern day Iraq) in the year 80 A.H / 689 C.E.¹ He is better known as al-imām al-Āzām² (The Greatest Imām), or by his *kunyah* 'Abū Ḥanīfah. Born into a family of tradesmen, the Imām's family was of Persian origin.³ Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's father, Thābit, had met in the city of Kufa the companion Sayyedinā 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (raḍiyya Allāhu anhu) who made *duā* for him and his progeny, and some say that Abū Ḥanīfah was a result of this *duā*.⁴

He is the first of the four *mujtahid* Imām and the only Successor (*tābi'i*) among them, having seen the Companions Anas ibn Mālik,⁵ Abdullāh ibn al-Hārith ibn Juz' al-Zabidi, Jābir ibn Abdullāh, Ma'qal ibn Yasar, Wa'sila ibn al-Asqa', 'A'isha bint Hajrad and 'Abdullāh ibn Anis.⁶ A person becomes a *tābi'i*

¹ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:391. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

الإمام، فقيه الملة، عالم العراق أبو حنيفة النعمان بن ثابت بن زوط التميمي، الكوفي، مولى بهي تميم الله بن ثعلبة يقال: إنه من أباء الفرس. ولد سنة ثمانين في حياة صغار الصحابة.

² Imām Dhahabi: *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 1:168. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1374/1956

(الإمام الأعظم فقيه العراق)

³ Ibn Hajar: *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 4:229. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah. 1416/1995

⁴ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:395. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

⁵ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:391. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996

⁶ This is the verdict of Ibn Hajar as recorded by Imām Suyūtī: *Tabyid al-sahifa*, p.34. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1410/1990

(successor) by meeting a *Sahābi* (a companion of the Prophet, *ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam*) and seeing him. It is not a condition that he keeps his company and narrates from the *Sahābi*.⁷

Some said that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah narrated from seven companions⁸ while others said that he narrated from eighteen companions.⁹

He is one of the four Imāms whose school of jurisprudence is followed.¹⁰ Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was the first to start the systematic study of Jurisprudence¹¹, analyse Islamic Jurisprudence and divide it into subjects.

It has been authentically narrated that Sufyān al-Thawri (d. 161 A.H) praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Sufyān al -Thawri said: "Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was the best Jurist (*faqih*) from the inhabitants of earth."¹² Sufyān al -Thawri stood up when Abū Ḥanīfah visited him after his brother's death, and he said: "This man holds a high rank in knowledge, and if I did not stand up for his knowledge, I would stand up for his age, and if not for his age then for his piety and if not for his piety then for his

⁷ Imām Ibn Hajar: *Nuzhat al-nazar*, p.143. Riyadh: Al Maktaba Al Wataniya, 1422/2001

⁸ Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, 13:416. Riyadh:Dār Alam al Kutub,1424/2003

⁹ al-Haytami: *al-Khayrāt al-hisān fi manaqib Abi Hanifah al-Nu'mān*, p.25, Egypt, 1324/1906

¹⁰ Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, 13:416. Riyadh:Dār Alam al Kutub,1424/2003

¹¹ al-Haytami: *al-Khayrāt al-hisān fi mānāqib Abi Hanifāh al-Nu'mān*, p.32, Egypt, 1324/1906

¹² al-Khatib al-Baghdadi :*Tarikh Baghdad*, 15:471. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī , 1422/2001

Jurisprudence.¹³

'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d.181 A.H/797 C.E) said "Abū Ḥanīfah is the best in Jurisprudence among the people. I have not seen the like of him in Jurisprudence."¹⁴

His authority in the field of Jurisprudence can be realised by reading the statement of Imām Shāfi'i, who said: "People are dependent on Abū Ḥanīfah in the field of Jurisprudence. I have not seen anyone better in Jurisprudence than Abū Ḥanīfah."¹⁵ In another statement he said: "People are children to Abū Ḥanīfah in Jurisprudence." Imām Dhahabi added: "Leadership in the matters of Jurisprudence and its detail belongs to him and there is no doubt on this issue".¹⁶

al-'A'mash [d.148 A.H/765 C.E] who was an authority in the field of ḥadīth (*muhaddith*) said to Abū Ḥanīfah: "O Nu'mān! What is your opinion regarding such-and-such matter?" He replied: "Such-and-such." He said: "From where do you say this?" He said: "You narrated to us *ḥadīth* from so-and-so such-and-such." Al-'A'mash said: "O group of Jurists, you are the

¹³ ibid,15:467-8

أو ما أنكرت من ذلك هنارجل من العلم بمكان فان لم أعلم لعله قمت لسنه وإن لم أعلم لبسنه قمت لفقهه
 وإن لم أعلم لفقهه قمت لورعه فاجهني فلم يكن عندي جوابا

¹⁴ ibid,15:469

وأما أفقه الناس فأبو حنيفة ثم قال ما رأيت في الفقه مثله

¹⁵ ibid,15:474

الشافعى يقول الناس عيال على أبي حنيفة في الفقه الشافعى يقول ما رأيت أحدا أفقه من أبي حنيفة

¹⁶ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:403. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996

وقال الشافعى: الناس في الفقه عيال على أبي حنيفة. قلت: الإمامة في الفقه ودقائقه مسلمة إلى هذا الإمام. وهذا أمر لا شك فيه

doctors, and we are the pharmacists."¹⁷ In another narration al-'A'mash has been recorded to have said: "You have achieved both the stations [of a *muhaddith* as well as a Jurist]."¹⁸ He meant that the narrators of *ahadīth* merely narrate the *ahadīth* just as a pharmacist distributes medicine, but the Jurist show the application of these *ahadīth* just as a doctor prescribes the appropriate medicine for the appropriate illness.

To become a Jurist of the highest rank [*mujtahid mutlaq*], one of the necessary requirement is to be an expert in the science of *hadīth*. As for the breadth of a Jurist's knowledge, it is recorded that Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal's student Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydullah ibn al-Munadi heard a man ask him (Imām Ahmad): "When a man has memorised 100,000 *ahadīth*, is he a scholar of Jurisprudence?" And he said, "No." The man asked, "200,000 then?" And he said, "No." The man asked, "Then 300,000?" And he said, "No." The man asked, "400,000?" And Ahmad gestured with his hand to signify "about that many".¹⁹

The superiority of a Jurist over a scholar of *hadīth* (*muhaddith*) has been conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ in a narration recorded by Abū Dawūd. Narrated Zayd ibn Thābit: I heard the Apostle of Allāh (peace be upon him) say: May Allāh

¹⁷ Ibn Hibbān: *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, 8:467. India: Dairatul Ma'arif, 1393/1973

قال: الأعمش أنتم يا معاشر الفقهاء الأطباء ونحن الصيادلة

¹⁸ al-Haytami: *al-Khayrāt al-hisān fi manaqib Abi Hanīfah al-Nu'mān*, p.69, Egypt, 1324/1906

¹⁹ Ibn al-Qayyim: *I'lām al-muwaqqi'in*, 6:115. Saudi Arabia: Dār ibn al-Jawziyyah, 1423/2002

رواية محمد بن عبید الله بن المبادى و قد سمع رجلا يسأله اذا حفظ الرجل مائة الف حديث يكون فقيها
قال لاقال فمائة الف قال لا قال فاربعيناتة الف قال بيده مكنا و حرکها

brighten a man who hears a tradition (*ḥadīth*) from us; gets it by heart and passes it on to others. Many a bearer of knowledge conveys it to one who is more versed than he is; and many a bearer of knowledge is not versed in it²⁰.

The meaning of the narration is that many *muhaddith* (those who transmit the *ḥadīth*) merely transmit the *ḥadīth* and convey it to the Jurists who deduce ruling from these *aḥadīth*.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was a Jurist of the highest order. He was an absolute *mujtahid* (*mujtahid mutlaq*). He was able to derive rulings from the texts through his own linguistic and juridical perspicuity. He not only memorised thousands of *aḥadīth* but was also able to use those *aḥadīth* for deriving the laws of Jurisprudence. Reiterating the view of Imām al-‘A’mash, another scholar of *ḥadīth*, Imām Abu ‘Isa al- Tirmidhi (d. 279 A.H/892 C.E) said: "The Jurists are more knowledgeable of the meaning of *ahādīth*²¹".

Once it is established that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was a Jurist of the highest order, it is understood that he was a master in the science of *ḥadīth*, which is one of the pre requisites to be a *mujtahid mutlaq*.

²⁰ AbūDawūd: Sunan, 4:46, Chapter: *Kitāb al ilm*, no.3660. Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 1418/1997

نظر الله امر أسمع منا حديثاً فحفظه حتى يبلغه فرب حامل فقه إلى من هو أفقه منه ورب حامل فقه
ليس بفقير

²¹ Tirmidhi: *Jami` at-Tirmidhi*, 3:307, Chapter: *Kitāb al Janā'iz*, no.990. Egypt: Mustafā Al-Babi Al-Halabi, 1398/1978.

قال الفقهاء وهم أعلم بمعانى الحديث

Kufa at the time of the Imām's birth [in 80 A.H] was a great center of knowledge and learning, with many of the noble Prophet's (ṣallAllāhu ʻalayhi wa sallam) companions having taken residence there. The successor (*tāb'i*) Qatāda bin Diama (d.117A.H/735 C.E) said that one thousand and fifty companions of the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu ʻalayhi wa sallam) settled in the city of Kufa among which twenty four were those who participated in the battle of Badr²².

The vast amount of *aḥadīth* narrated by these companions were memorised by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. It would not be wise to say that having been born at the center of ḥadīth transmission, the Imām did not learn the science of ḥadīth!

It has been recorded that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah travelled extensively to increase his knowledge of ḥadīth. Imām Dhahabi writes: "Imām Abū Ḥanīfah travelled extensively in search of ḥadīth especially after 100 A.H".²³

Imām al- Sam'ānī [d.562A.H/1166C.E] an authority in the field of ḥadīth and history, writes: "When he [Imām Abū Ḥanīfah] engaged himself in the pursuit of knowledge, he went into the

²² Imām Sakhāwi: *Fatḥ al-mughīth bi-sharḥ Alfiyat al-ḥadīth lil-Irāqī*, 4:111. Egypt: Maktabah As sunnah, 1424/2003

وقال قتادة: ..لـ الكوفة من الصحابة ألف وخمسون؛ منهم أربعة وعشرون بدربيون

²³ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a`lām al-nubalā'*, 6:396. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

الإمام أبا حبيفة طلب الحدیث وأکثر منه في سنة مائة وبعدها

depth of knowledge and attained such a rank which others could not.”²⁴

Imām Abū al-Mu'ayyid Al-Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Makki al-Khawārizmi (d.568 A.H/1172 C.E) has recorded that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah learnt religious sciences from around four thousand teachers. He has mentioned the names of two hundred and forty six teachers.²⁵

One of the teachers in this list is Imām Sha'bi (d.104 A.H/722 C.E), who has been reported to have met five hundred companions of the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam)²⁶ and narrated ḥadīth from one hundred and fifty companions of the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam)²⁷. He was one of the chief teachers of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah²⁸. When such is the status of one of the teachers of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, then imagine the amount of knowledge which Imām Abū Ḥanīfah would have received from all of his teachers!

²⁴ 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammed al- Sam'ānī :Kitāb al-Ansāb; 6:67. Cairo: Maktaba Ibn Taymiyyah, 1400/1980

واشتغل بطلب العلم وبالغ فيه حق حصل له ما لم يحصل لغيره

²⁵ al-Khawārizmi: Maqaqib al- Imām al- Aāzam, 1:67-88. India: Da'irat al-Ma'arif, 1321/1894

²⁶ Imām Dhahabi: Tadzhkirat al-huffāz, 1:81. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

شعبة عن منصور بن عبد الرحمن عن الشعبي قال: أدركت خمسين مائة من أصحاب النبي صل الله عليه وآله وسلم

²⁷ Ibn Hibbān: Kitāb al-Thiqāt, 5:186. India: Da'irat al-Ma'arif, 1398/1978

رَوَى عَنْ: خَمْسِينَ وَمَائَةً مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

²⁸ Imām Dhahabi: Tadzhkirat al-huffāz, 1:79. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

وهو أكبر شيخ لأبي حنيفة

Abu Muhammad 'Abdullāh bin Muhammad bin Yāqūb bin al-Hārith al Hārithi [d. 340 A.H/ 952 C.E] has recorded on the authority of Yahyā bin Nasr that he said, "I entered upon Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's place which was filled with books, so I said, "what is this"? He (Imām Abū Ḥanīfah) said, "These are all *ahādīth*. I have narrated only a few of them from which people can derive benefit."²⁹"

'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, who is an authority in the field of ḥadīth, narrated ḥadīth from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah³⁰. He has been authentically reported to have said: "If anyone has the right to issue [a legal verdict] using his opinion, Abū Ḥanīfah has the right to issue using his opinion."³¹"

Abu Muhammad Al-Hasan ibn Abd ar-Rahmān Khallad Al-Rāmahurmuzi (d. 360 A.H/970 C.E) wrote *al-Muhaddith al-Fāsil Bayn al-Rawi wa al-Wa`i* ("The ḥadīth Scholar That Differentiates Between Narrators and Containers"). It was the first comprehensive book on ḥadīth science ever written. In this book he writes: "Whenever Imām Sh'uba and Imām Sufyān al-

²⁹ Yāqūb al Hārithi: *Musnad Abū Ḥanīfah*, p.276, no.805. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1429/2008

احديث مرفوع: كتب إلى صالح بن أبي رمیح، أخدرت أهتم بمن عثروا والوازق، أخبرت أخالد بن: أير، أخبرتني بعثي بن نصر بن حاجب، قال: دخلت على أبي حنيفة، في بيته مملوء كتبًا فقلت: ماهذا؟ قال: هذه أحاديث كلها، وما حذثت به إلا أيسير الذي ينفع بها

³⁰ Ibn Abi Shaybah: *Musannaf*, 7:574 (no.12532) and 14:342 (no.28611) Beirut: Dar Qurtuba, 1427/2007

³¹ al-Khatib al-Baghdadi :*Tarikh Baghdad*, 15:471. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami , 1422/2001

عبدالرازق يقول: سمعت بن البارك يقول إن كان أحد ينبغى له أن يقول برأيه فأبو حنيفة ينبغى له أن يقول برأيه أخبرني

Thawri had a difference of opinion regarding a ḥadīth, they would say "let us go to Mis'ar [ibn Kidam] as he is the scale of authority in this field".³²

Both, Imām Sh'uba (d. 160 A.H/777 C.E) and Imām Sufyān al-Thawri (d.161A.H/778C.E) were authorities in the field of ḥadīth. When they had a disagreement they used to visit Imām Mis'ar ibn Kidam, whose narrations are found in the six major collections of ḥadīth. This is enough to show the high status of Imām Mis'ar ibn Kidam [d.155 A.H/772 C.E] in the science of ḥadīth.

Imām Mis'ar ibn Kidam who is an authority in the field of ḥadīth, said: "We attained the science of ḥadīth with Abū Ḥanīfah but he surpassed us. Then we opted for asceticism (abandoning the desire of the world) and he outstripped us in this as well. Thereafter, we started competing with him in Jurisprudence and his Juristic excellence is before you!"³³"

Imām Shu'ba bin al-Hajjāj was an expert in the science of criticism and praise of ḥadīth narrator (*Jarh wa Ta'dīl*). Ibn 'Abd

³² al-Rāmahurmuzi: *Muhaddith al-Fāsil Bayn*; P 395, no.402. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1391 / 1971

حدثنا عبد الله بن أحمد الغزامي قال: سمعت ابراهيم بن سعيد الجوهري يقول: كان شعبة وسفيان اذا اختلفا قالا: اذهبا بنا الى الميزان مسرعا.

³³ Imām Dhahabi: *Manāqib al- Imām Abi Hanīfah wa Sahibayh*, p.43.India: Jannat Ihya al-Ma'arif al-Nu'maniyyah, 1366/1947

أبو بحبيبي بن أبي ميسرة: ثنا خلاد بن بحبيبي قال: قال مسعود بن كدام: طلبتُ مع أبي حنفية الحديث فغلبنا، وأخذنا في الزهد فترعرع علينا، وطلبنا معه الفقه فجاء منه ما ترثون.

al-Barr narrates through his chain of narration that Shu'bah bin al-Hajjāj had good opinion about Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.³⁴

Makki ibn Ibrāhim (126 A.H/744C.E– 214 A.H/829C.E) is an authority in the field of ḥadīth sciences and one of the senior most teachers of Imām Bukhāri. He has narrated ḥadīth from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah .He praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah by saying: “He was the most knowledgeable of the people in his time.”³⁵

Imām al-Mizzi writes: Sālih ibn Muhammad al-Asadi al-Hāfiẓ said: I heard Yahyā ibn Ma'in [d.233 A.H/847 C.E] say: “Abū Ḥanīfah was trustworthy in ḥadīth. He did not narrate a ḥadīth except that which he remembered.”³⁶

Imām al-Dhahabi wrote: “Logic, dialectics and the philosophy of the ancients were not, by Allāh, from the sciences of the *Sahābah*, nor the *Tabi'in*, nor al-Awza'i, al-Thawri, Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfah. Rather, their sciences were the Qur'ān and

³⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: *Al-Intiqa fi Fadā'il al-A'immati l-Thalāthāt al-Fuqahā*, p.196. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāir al-Islamiyyah, 1417/1997.

شیابہ بن سوار یقول کان شعبہ حسن الرأی فی أبي حنیفة

³⁵ al-Khatib al-Baghdadi :*Tarikh Baghdad*, 15:473. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami , 1422/2001.

وقال النجاشی حدثنا إسماعیل بن محمد الفارسی قال سمعت مکی بن ابراهیم ذکر ابا حنیفة فقال کان اعلم اهل زمانه

³⁶ al-Mizzi:*Tahdhib al-Kamāl* 29:424.Berut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1408/1987, Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:395. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi :*Tarikh Baghdad*, 13:419. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami , 1422/2001

وقال صالح بن محمد الاسدی الحافظ: سمعت یحیی بن معین یقول: کان أبو حنیفة ثقة في الحديث.

ḥadīth.³⁷" This is sufficient evidence to indicate the expertise of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in the field of Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

Ali ibn al-Madini (d. 235 A.H/850 C.E) said: "Al-Thawri, Ibn al-Mubārak, Hammād ibn Zayd, Hushaym, Waki' ibn al-Jarrāh, 'Abbād ibn al-'Awām and Ja'far ibn 'Awn narrated from Abū Ḥanīfah. He is trustworthy there is no harm in him."³⁸"

Abu 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463 A. H/1071CE) has mentioned names of sixty seven scholars in the field of ḥadīth and Jurisprudence. After mentioning these names he writes: "All of them have praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah with lofty words."³⁹

Imām Abū Dawūd [d.275 A.H/897C.E], the compiler of Sunan, an undisputed authority in the field of ḥadīth, said: "Allāh have mercy on Mālik, he was an Imām, Allāh have mercy on al-Shāfi'i,

³⁷ Imām Dhahabi: Tadhkirat al-huffāz, 1:205. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

يعلم البنط و الجدل و حكمة الأولياء التي تسلب الإيمان و تورث الشكوك و الحيرة التي لم تكن والله من علم الصحابة ولا التابعين ولا من علم الأوزاعي و الشورى و مالك و أبي حنيفة و ابن أبي ذئب و شعبة ولا والله عرفها ابن المبارك. ولا أبو يوسف القائل من طلب الدين بالكلام تزنيق ولا كييع ولا ابن مهدي ولا ابن وهب ولا الشافعى ولا عفان ولا أبو عبيدة ولا ابن المدينى واحمد و أبو ثور والهرنفى والبخارى والأثرى و مسلم و النسائى و ابن خزيمة و ابن سريح و ابن المنذر و أمثالهم بل كانت علومهم القرآن والحديث و الفقه و النحو و شبه ذلك نعم

³⁸ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: Jami' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Fadlih, p. 1083, no.2112. Dammām: Dār Ibn al-Jawzi, 1414/1994

وقال على بن المدينى: أبو حنيفة روى عنه الشورى و ابن المبارك و حماد بن زيد و هشيم و كييع بن المبراج و عباد بن العوام و جعفر بن عون وهو ثقة لا يأس به.

³⁹ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: Al-Intiqā fi Fadā'il al-A'immati I-Thalāthāt al-Fuqahā, p.193-229. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāir al-Islamiyyah, 1417/1997

he was an Imām, Allāh have mercy on Abū Ḥanīfah; he was an Imām.⁴⁰"

Imām Dhahabi [d.748 A.H/1347 C.E] is one of the most strict *ḥadīth* scholars to be born in the Islāmic history. He laid down very stringent conditions for accepting any narrator of the *ḥadīth* to be trustworthy. This Imām Dhahabi not only wrote a book in praise of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah but praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in his other works as well.

Dhahabi included Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, which he introduced with the words: "This is the memorial of the names of those who were declared the trustees among the carriers of the Science of the Prophet and to whose *ijtihād* one refers concerning matters of narrator-certification, authentication and falsification."⁴¹

Regarding Khārijah Ibn Zayd Ibn Thābit, Imām Dhahabi writes: "He was a major scholar of Jurisprudence, but narrated only a few *ḥadīth*. Hence I have not included him in the *huffāz* (memoriser) of *ḥadīth*."⁴² Similarly, Imām Dhahabi has not

⁴⁰ ibid, p.67

سمعت أبا داؤد سليمان بن الأشعث بن اسحاق السجستاني رحمه الله يقول: رحم الله مالكا كان اماماً، رحم الله الشافعي كان اماماً، رحم الله أبا حنيفة كان اماماً.

⁴¹ Imām Dhahabi: *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 1:1. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1374/1956

هذه تذكرة باسماء معدلي حملة العلم النبوى ومن يرجع الى اجتهادهم في التوثيق والتضعيف
والتصحيح والتزييف وبأى الله اعتمدوا عليه اني بـ

⁴² ibid; 1:91

خارجية بن زيد بن ثابت الانصارى البىنى أحد الفقهاء من كبار العلماء الا انه قليل الحديث فلهذا الم
اذكره في الحفاظ رحمه الله تعالى

mentioned those people in his book who were although *huffāz* of the ḥadīth, but were not accepted as a trustworthy narrator. Imām Dhahabi writes: "Hishām bin Muhammed al-Kalbi, *hāfiẓ* [memoriser of ḥadīth], but is among the *matruk* (abandoned) narrators. He was not trustworthy. Hence I have not included him among the *huffāz* of the ḥadīth."⁴³

It is in this *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, Imām Dhahabi describes Imām Abū Hanīfah as "al-Imām al- Aázam" (The Greatest Imām)⁴⁴ and devotes many pages in praise of Imām Abū Hanīfah and his teachers. This leaves with no doubt that Imām Abū Hanīfah was not only a major ḥadīth narrator but was a trustworthy narrator also.

Imām Shāfi'i said: "Knowledge revolves around three men: Mālik [bn Anas,], Laith [ibn Sā`d] and [Sufyān] ibn 'Uyaynah.". After writing this statement of Imām Shāfi'i , Imām Dhahabi adds: "I say there are seven others around whom the knowledge revolves and they are: al Awzā'i, al Thawri, Muammar, Abū Ḥanīfah, Shu'ba, Hammād and Hammād bin Zayd."⁴⁵

⁴³ ibid; 1:343

هشام بن الكلبي الحافظ أحد المتروكين ليس بشقة فلهذا المدخله بين حفاظ الحديث

⁴⁴ Ibid; 1:168

أبو حنيفة الإمام الأعظم فقيه العراق

⁴⁵ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 8:94. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

قال الشافعى: العلم يدور على ثلاثة: مالك، واللثى، وابن عيينة. قلت: بلى وعلى سبعة معهم، وهذه:
الأوزاعى، والثورى، ومغمر، وأبو حنيفة، وشعبة، والمتادان

Dhahabi relates that, Waki` bn al-Jarrāh gave religious verdict (*fatwā*) according to what Abū Ḥanīfah said and Yahyā al-Qattan also used to give *fatwā* according to what Abū Ḥanīfah said.⁴⁶

Imām Dhahabi includes Imām Abū Ḥanīfah along with Imām Saīd ibn musayyab, Imām Sha'bi, Imām Nakhaī, Imām Zuhri, Imām 'Awzai and Imām 'Amash in the list of some of the great scholars who were the leaders of *ummah* during their time. All these scholars were expert in *ḥadīth*. By mentioning Imām Abū Ḥanīfah along with these *ḥadīth* scholars, Imām Dhahabi has shown that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was an authority in the field of *ḥadīth*.⁴⁷

Imām Dhahabi writes "Towards the end of 150 A.H when most of the *tabi'een* (successors) had passed away, then a group of people took up the task of narrator certification, authentication and falsification. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah criticised Jābir al-Ja'fi, by saying: "I never saw a greater liar than Jābir al-Ja'fi"⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Imām Dhahabi: *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 1:307. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1374/1956

قال يحيى: ما رأيتك أفضلاً منه يقوم الليل ويسرد الصوم ويفتى بقول أبي حنيفة وكان يحيى القطان
يفتى بقول أبي حنيفة أيضاً

⁴⁷ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 9:525. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

⁴⁸ Dhahabi: *Dhikr min Yu'tamad Qaulah fil Jarah wal Tā'deel*, p.175. Beirut: Dār al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah, 1410/1990

فليما كان عند انقراض عامة التابعين في حدود الخمسين ومئة. تكلّم طائفة من الجهابذة في التوثيق
والتضعيف. فقال أبو حنيفة: ما رأيتك أكذب من جابر الجعفي

This criticism of Jābir al-Ja'fi was retained by Imām Ibn 'Adī⁴⁹ and Imām at-Tirmidhi, who relates through his chain of narration in which Imām Abū Ḥanīfah said: "I never saw a greater liar than Jābir al-Ja'fi and nor anyone more superior than 'Atā ibn Abū Rabah."⁵⁰ Imām Dhahabi writes: Abū Ḥanīfah said "I have seen both, Rabi'a and Abū Zanād but Abū Zanād is a better jurist".⁵¹ Imām Dhahabi uses this approval by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah for narrator certification. This is clear evidence that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was cautious in narrating ḥadīth and was an authority in the science of criticism and praise of ḥadīth narrator.

It should be noted that if a scholar of ḥadīth does not narrate from a particular narrator, then that does not amount to that narrator being weak (*da'if*) or untrustworthy. For instance, Imām Bukhārī in his *Sahih al-Bukhārī* has narrated only two *ahadīth* from Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal, out of which only one is narrated directly from Imām Hanbal. This does not imply that Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal was a weak narrator. Similarly Imām Bukhārī has not narrated even one ḥadīth through Imām Shafī'i, which does not mean Imām Shafī'i was a weak narrator. There are many reasons why some times trustworthy narrators are

⁴⁹ Ibn 'Adī: *al-Kāmil fi al-du'a'*, 2:113 .Beirut: Dār al Fikr ,1409/1988

⁵⁰ Abū 'Isa Muhammad at-Tirmidhī: *Jami' at-Tirmidhi*, 5:741, *Kitāb al-'ilal*. Cairo: Mustafā al-Babi al-Halabi, 1398/1978

حدثنا محمود بن غيلان حدثنا أبو بعبي الحناني قال سمعت أبو حنيفة يقول ما رأيت أحداً أكذب من
جابر الجعفي ولا أفضل من عطاء بن أبي رباح

⁵¹ Imām Dhahabi: *Tadhdhib al-huffāz*, 1:135. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmīyah, 1374/1956

وقال أبو حنيفة رأيت ربعة وأبا الزناد وأبا الزناد أفقه الرجالين

not included in the chain of narration. For example, during the time of Imām Bukhārī, there was an issue of the creation of the Qur'ān. Imām Muhammed ibn Yahyā adh-Dhuhlī was one of the teachers of Imām Bukhārī. He considered the pronunciation of the Qur'ān as eternal and Imām Bukhārī said, 'Our actions are created and the pronunciation is one our actions.' The disagreement was only over the pronunciation (*lafz*) of the Qur'ān, not the words of the Qur'ān. This difference of view led to the disagreement between Imām Dhuhlī and his student, Imām Bukhārī. After this, mass propaganda started against Imām Bukhārī, which led to accusations that he believed the words of the Qur'ān to be created. When Imām Dhuhlī heard these rumors, he disconnected his ties with Imām Bukhārī and became his foe. He started warning people by announcing that they should not attend the lectures of Imām Bukhārī. As a result, people refrained from sitting in his lectures, except Imām Muslim ibn Hajjāj. At last, due to his disappointment, Imām Bukhārī left the city of Nīshāpūr and returned to Bukhārā.⁵²

What has to be observed is that when everybody stopped sitting in the lectures of Imām Bukhārī, his student Imām Muslim ibn Hajjāj, did not leave his teacher. In spite of this closeness, Imām Muslim ibn Hajjāj has not narrated a single *ḥadīth* in his book *Sahih Muslim* from his teacher, Imām Bukhārī. Similarly Imām Muslim has not narrated any *ḥadīth* from Imām Dhuhuli, who happened to be his teacher as well. Here, we see Imām Muslim ibn Hallaj, taking precaution at the time of rumour. His not

⁵² Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 12:458. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

narrating *aḥadīth* from Imām Bukhārī or Imām Dhuhūlī does not make Imām Bukhārī and Dhuhūlī as weak (*da’if*) narrators.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah defined *Imān* (faith) as declaration of the tongue and acceptance by the heart whereas some other scholars defined *Imān* as declaration of the tongue and action of the limbs. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah considered actions to be the light of *Imān*, whereas others considered actions to be the integral part of *Imān*. This disagreement of expressing the same thing but in different ways of polemics (*kalām*) led to the confusion among many people. A few enemies of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah who were jealous with his popularity spread rumors that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah does not consider good actions to be a part of Islam itself! It was because of this rumour that many scholars of *ḥadīth* took precaution in not narrating *aḥadīth* from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. However, this does not make him a weak (*da’if*) narrator.

Highlighting this fact, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah wrote: “There is no doubt regarding Imām Abū Ḥanīfah’s knowledge. People later attributed many lies to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, which were all untrue. The aim of such writings was to taint Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.”⁵³

Imām Muhammed ibn al-Hasan ash-Shaybānī [d.189A.H/805C.E] the foremost student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, compiled the narrations from his teacher which he called *Kitāb al-Athār*. It

⁵³ Ibn Taymiyyah: *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyah*, 2:619. Cairo: Muassasat Qurtuba, 1406/1986

كما أن أبا حنيفة وإن كان الناس خالفوه في أشياء وأنكر وها عليه فلا يستريب أحد في فقهه وفهمه
وعلمه. وقد نقلوا عنه أشياء يقصدون بها الشناعة عليه. وهي كذب عليه قطعاً

was the first book composed in Islam after the generation of the Companions. Imām Abū Hanīfah laid down very strict conditions for narrating a ḥadīth. Imām al-Tahāwi [d.321A.H/933C.E] narrates with his chain of narration that Imām Abū Hanīfah said: "No man should narrate a ḥadīth unless he remembers it since the [first] day of hearing to the day of narrating."⁵⁴ Imām Dhahabi writes: "Imām Abū Hanīfah did not narrate a ḥadīth except that which he remembered".⁵⁵

Imām al-Nawawī writes : The view of[Imām] Mālik and [Imām] Abū Hanīfah is that no ḥadīth can be used as an evidence unless the narrator narrates it from his memory. This is an extreme view." Commenting on the above Imām al-Suyūti writes: "This condition is very difficult and the scholars of ḥadīth have acted contrary to it because if we analyse *sahihayn* [Sahih al-Bukhāri and Sahih al-Muslim] we will not get many narrators who fulfilled this condition of memory."⁵⁶ It was because of this strict

⁵⁴ Mullā 'Ali al-Qāri: *Sharh Musnad Abū Hanīfah*, p.7. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1405/1985

قال الطحاوى حدثنا سليمان بن شعيب حدثنا أبي قال أملأ علينا أبو يوسف قال قال أبو حنيفة لا

ينبغى للرجل أن يحدث من الحديث إلا ما حفظه من يوم سمعه إلى يوم يحدث به

⁵⁵ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:395. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996. This was reported by Imām al Mizzi and Imām Ibn Hajar al asqālani as well. [See fn.36]

قال محمد بن سعيد التوسي: سمعت يحيى بن معين يقول كان أبو حنيفة يثقة لا يحذف بالحذف إلا ما

يحفظه ولا يحذف مما لا يحذف

⁵⁶ al-Suyūti: *Tadrib al-Rawi fi Sharh Taqrīb al-Nawawī*, 2:55. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1417/1996

فمن البشّدين من قال: لا حجة إلا فيما رواه من حفظه وتنكره روى عن مالك، وأبي حنيفة، وأبي بكر

الصيدلاني.

condition that not many people could narrate *hadīth* from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

In the science of *hadīth*, the shorter the chain of narration, the higher is its value and strength. Imām Bukhārī [d.256A.H/ 870 C.E] compiled his famous *al-Jāmi' al-Musnad al-Sahīh*, popularly known as *Sahih al-Bukhārī*. *Sahih al-Bukhārī* contains twenty two narrations with only three narrators [*Thulāthiyāt*] between Imām Bukhārī and Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam). These twenty two chains are considered to be the loftiest. Out of these twenty two narrations, twenty are related by the students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Of these twenty narrations, eleven narrations are from Makki bin Ibrahim alone, a student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah!

Imām Ibrāhim was one of the teachers of Imām Bukhārī. In fact, Imām Bukhārī is a grand student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah through many other chains of narration. We will suffice with one such chain of narration.

Imām Bukhari narrates from his father, Ismā'il; who narrates from Ibn Mubārak who narrates from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

Imām Ibn Hajar al-Asqalāni writes: "Ismā'il bin Ibrahim bin al-Mughira al-Ja'fai, the father of the compiler of *Al-sahih* [al-Bukhārī]. He narrated from Hammād Ibn Zaid and [Abdullāh] Ibn Mubārak"⁵⁷. Imām Bukhārī writes that Ibn Mubārak narrated

⁵⁷ Ibn Hajar: *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, 1:140. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1416/ 1995

راس اعیل بن ابراهیم بن المغیرة اجمعی البخاری والد الامام صاحب الصحيح روى عن حماد بن زین وابن المبارک

from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah⁵⁸.

Hence it is clear that Imām Bukhārī's father narrated from Ibn Mubārak, who in turn narrated from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

Imām Ibn Hajar al-asqalāni writes: "The highest category of teachers from whom Imām Bukhārī narrates includes successors (*tabi'un*) like Makki bin Ibrāhim, Abu 'Asim al-Nabil, 'Ubaidullah bin Musā, Abu Nu'aim al-Fadal bin Dukain and Khallād bin Yahyā".⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that in this "highest category" of teachers except Khallād bin Yahyā all others are students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.⁶⁰

The high rank of Imām Abū Hanīfah in the field of *ḥadīth* can be understood by realising the fact that he narrated about fifteen *ḥadīth* with one *sahābi* (companion) between him and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam). All the companions of the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam) are upright and considered trustworthy in *ḥadīth* science. These narrations with one link between the narrator and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam) are called *wuhdān* or *uhādiyāt*. Out of the four Imāms of Jurisprudence Imām Abū Hanīfah alone has this high status. If there are two people between the narrator of the *ḥadīth* and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam) then the chain is called

⁵⁸ Imām Bukhari: Tārikh al-Kabir, 4:81, no.2253. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmīyyah, 1407/1986

إعْمَانُ بْنُ ثَابِتٍ أَبُو حَنِيفَةَ الْكُوفِيُّ مُولَى لِبْنِي تَيْمٍ اللَّهُ بْنُ ثَلْبَةَ رَوَى عَنْهُ عَبَادُ بْنَ الْعَوَامِ وَابْنَ الْمَبَارَكِ
وَهَشِيمَ وَكَيْعَ وَمُسْلِمَ بْنَ خَالِدَ وَأَبُو مَعَاوِيَةَ وَالْمَقْرَبِ

⁵⁹ Ibn Hajar al- asqalāni: Fath al-Bāri; 1:503. Riyadh: Sultān bin 'Abdul Aziz printing, 1421/2001

⁶⁰ Imām Dhahabi: Manāqib al- Imām Abi Hanīfah wa Sahibayh, p.20. India: Jannat Ihya al-Ma'arif al-Nu'maniyyah, 1366/1947

thunāiyāt. Imām Abū Hanīfah has narrated about five hundred *thunāiyāt*. Out of the four Imāms of Jurisprudence only Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām Mālik have achieved this status of narrating *thunāiyāt*. And if there are three narrators between the narrator of the *hadīth* and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam), it is called *thulāthiyāt*. We have already discussed that Imām Bukhāri has twenty two *thulāthiyāt* (three links) but he has not narrated any *wuhdān* (one link) or *thunāiyāt* (two links) narration. On the other hand Imām Abū Hanīfah has narrated more than one thousand *thulāthiyāt*!

These narrations with one link, two links and three links between the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu álayhi wa sallam) and Imām Abū Hanīfah can be seen in *Kitāb al-Athār* of Imām Abu Yusūf (d.182 A.H/798 C.E), *Kitāb al-Athār* of Imām Muhammad bin al-Hassan al-Shaybāni (d.189 A.H/805 C.E), *Manaqib al-Imām al-Aážam*, *Jaami' al-Masāníd*; both by al-Khawārzimi (d.568A.H/1172C.E) and *Manaqib al-Imām al-Aážam* by al-Kurdari (d.827A.H/1424 C.E)

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was a *wali* (friend) of Allah. He spent his entire life in learning, practicing and teaching Islam. Yahyā ibn Ma'īn said: I heard Yahyā al-Qattān say: "We have sat in the company of Abū Ḥanīfah, by Allāh, and we heard from him. By Allāh, when I would look at him, I recognised in his face that he feared Allāh!"⁶¹ 'Ali ibn al-Madīnī narrated: I heard Sufyān ibn

⁶¹ al-Khatib al-Baghdadi :*Tarikh Baghdad* 15:482. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1422/2001

وورعه أخبرنا محمد بن أحمد بن رزق حدثنا أحمد بن علي بن عمر بن حبيش الرازي قال سمعت محمد بن

أحمد بن عصام يقول سمعت محمد بن سعد العوفي يقول سمعت يحيى بن معين يقول (Contd next page)

‘Uyaynah say: “Abū Ḥanīfah was an honourable person, and he would perform much prayers (Salāh) from his early life.⁶²”

May Allah elevate the status of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in both the worlds and help us to follow his teachings. Ameen.

Muhammed Fazlullāh Sābri Chishti

India, 18th Dhu al-Hijjah 1433 AH

4 November 2012 CE

سمعت يحيى القطان يقول جالسنا والله أبو حنيفة وسمعنا منه و كنت والله إذا نظرت إليه عرفت في وجهه أنه ينتمي والله عزوجل

⁶² ibid, 15:483

أخبرنا أبو نعيم الحافظ أخبرنا عبد الله بن جعفر بن فارس فيما أذن لي أن أرويه عنه قال حدثنا هارون بن سليمان حدثنا علي بن المديني قال سمعت سفيان بن عيينة يقول كان أبو حنيفة له مروءة وله صلاة في أول زمانه

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سہ ماہی مسلک مبینی

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